An Amazing History Is Sicily's

FROM various parts of the land come items from time to time relating Sicilian justice: a form of independent law execution which finds no favor in American eyes, but which seems most difficult to prevent.

It is not to be wondered at if the Sicilians take a shot at each other now and again, since from the dawn of history everyone has been taking a shot at the Sicilians.

This island, the largest in the Mediterranean, but small in comparison with other historic islands, has experienced a most amazing history; and it is only by remembering this history that Americans can ever begin to hope to understand the Sicilian himself.

The curious fact is that while Sicily is part of the history of every nation in Europe, it has no history of its own. And when, recently, the Sicilian peasants marched from their huts and took possession of great areas of land they were living again what happened thrice before in their own story, and many times in the stories of the invaders of the island.

The first inhabitants, and they appear as early as history is written, were the Siculi from Southern Italy. Then came the Greeks and Phoenicians, busy colonists; and then the Carthaginians. From that point forward a half-century of peace in Italy became something to gossip about. The island saw a succession of tyrants and conquerors, even including Genseric of the Vandals, and in 1060 (six years before William of Normandy conquered England), Robert the Norman.

From 1734 to 1860 Naples was ruled by Bourbon kings; at the latter date Garibaldi swept in and obtained Sicily for Victor Emanuel, and so the island became a part of the Kingdom of Italy.

These are only the barest high spots, for you can name almost any classic or medieval warrior of distinction and, on investigation, discover that either he conquered Sicily, or intended to conquer it, or bargained for it, or got killed in it.

The point is that the Sicilians never have known, until within the last half-century, what it is to be secure; they have led a fugitive existence, subject to a continuous series of military drafts and participating, without any scrap of national purpose, in everybody's fights. This has to be remembered in judging the Sicilians today.

The bulk of the Sicilian population is very poor. A small but comparatively wealthy class—composed principally of the owners, or *latifondi*—controls practically all the land, and most of them don't even reside in Sicily, preferring the social advantages of Rome, Naples or Paris. The class which elsewhere would be called the middle class is extremely poor. This straitened condition has been the cause of most of the abuses which vitiate Sicilian life.

In the last ten years of the nineteenth century the Sicilians began to emigrate, and in three years 220,000 workers had left, many of them naturally coming to the Americas.

The moral and intellectual defects of Sicilian society are in part results of the economic difficulties, and in part the effect of bad customs introduced or maintained during the long period of Sicilian isolation from the rest of Europe. When, in 1860, Sicily was incorporated in the Italian kingdom, hardly a tenth of the population could read and write. On the completion of unity, elementary schools were founded everywhere; but, though education was free, the indigence of the peasants in some regions prevented them from taking full advantage of the opportunities offered.

Brigandage has never wholly disappeared although the true brigands haunt only the remote and more inaccessible mountains. In the west portion of the island law and order are not yet supreme. The most frequent crime is murder; violent assaults with infliction of serious wounds are also frequent.

This readiness to commit bloodshed is attributable first to the history of Sicily itself and the interminable civil wars forced on it, and second to the influence of the Mafia, a Sicilian secret society, whose organization and purposes much resemble those of the Italian Camorra.

In its crudest form the Mafia was organized brigandage, blended with the vendetta or family feud. When Napoleon expelled the king of Naples, and the Bourbon court took refuge in Sicily there was a large number of armed troops in the service of the Sicilian feudal nobility. Largely through the influence of England a constitution was granted the island in 1812, and with the destruction of feudalism most of the feudal troops became brigands.

Powerless to suppress them, the ruler Ferdinand organized the bandits into a rural police, and they soon established a reign of terror. Two classes grew up; the vast majority of the inhabitants, destitute, were glad to place themselves under the protection of the Mafia, while the active members shared the plunder.

Thus the Mafia became a loosely organized society with an unwritten code of ethics, which embodied the rules of the vendetta. The candidate for Mafia is pledged to resist law and defeat justice; and the member (Mafiuso) considers it dishonorable to have recourse to lawful authority to obtain redress for a wrong or a crime committed against him. He therefore hides the identity of the offender from the police, reserving vengeance for himself or his friends and dependents.

While the Mafia today is not a unit, a single organization, it exists as a state of mind, which can be termed a complex social phenomenon, the result of centuries of misgovernment.

In view of the seizure of land by the poverty-stricken Sicilian peasants a few days ago, and the fact that the police (often in collusion with Mafia) merely watched without interfering, it seems that law and order, as understood here, do not yet rule in Sicily; and this, with the other considerations, must be remembered in assuming any attitude toward the Sicilians who mistakenly transfer their home habits to this country.

Romance Adds to Vogue of France's New Saint

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Sulpice, who made the lucky contract with Vermare and who enjoys a monopoly of the reproductions. The accompanying photograph is of the statue in the Cathedral of Orleans; the hardly less famous replica made at the Pope's express request, for the Church of Saint Louis of France in Rome varies in several slight particulars from the original. But anyone saying the prayer already cited before either of these statues or a reproduction of either is "sure to have his wish granted"; so "everybody" says. And what, think you, may be the dearest wish of the good churchmen and royalists who are doing so much to spread the cult of Jeanne Darc?

The Andre Vermare Jeanne Darc

Far and beyond any such hierarchical or partisan designs must thoughtful observers place the significance for France of this immensely vital and growing interest in the nation's Virgin Liberatrice. The whole miracle of Jeanne's wonderful achievement in the events that crowded the four great months following her departure from Vaucouleurs on February 24, 1429, consisted in her success in imbuing the soldiers and the people with faith in themselves. She simply emblazoned in undying light on the pages of history a demonstration of the invincible might of honest and unwavering faith in the triumph of the right—and of action corresponding to that faith.

It is well that this national heroine, in the dawning of a new and brighter era for humanity through awakened democracy, should come to symbolize the real soul of France. In exalting and illuminating her renown, it may be that many will be reminded that Jeanne was a faithful daughter of the Church and the champion of a Bourbon king. But many more will be reminded and made to reflect on the fact that she was a daughter of the common people, that through her confidence and courage, the national cause which a royal weakling had betrayed and lost by his philandering was made victorious, that her reward from Church was an ignominious and cruel death and from king a cowardly desertion and abandonment to her fate. Despite the monarchists and the clericals, Jeanne is destined to become the symbol of Democracy in France and in all the world. Shakespeare's prediction that the day should come when "Joan the Virgin will be hailed as the patron saint of France" is being fulfilled before our eyes in larger measure than he dreamed.

The Case of the Farmer—As the Farmer Sees It

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of former years. First of all, this harvest is, with one exception, the largest in American history. The corn crop is the greatest yield ever known and represents four-fifths of the world's production. The rice yield is one-fourth greater than anything we have ever known before. The sugar beet crop is one-third larger than anything in the past. The sweet potato crop is the largest ever produced. The potato yield has been beaten just once and then by a very narrow margin. And the number of live stock on the farms exceeds by more than 18 millions the average number for the five years prior to the war. Yet this gigantic harvest, costing more to produce than any crop ever raised in the United States, is worth three billion dollars less to the farmer than the smaller crop of 1919.

This is the farmer's story as he tells it himself. These are the reasons he quotes for the drift to the city in such numbers that a recent survey showed 60,000 men and boys leaving the farms of Ohio during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1920. These are the causes, he says, for his dissatisfaction with conditions, for the growth of farm organizations and for the demands for special privileges.

But before he rests his case he asks attention for a moment to a final summing-up by his representative, the Secretary of Agriculture who has submitted to President Wilson within the month these portentous opinions:

"The very foundation of our nation—the stability of our agriculture—is threatened.

"The farmer must have, under ordinary conditions, a reasonable prospect of a fair return for his labor and the use of his capital.

"Everything possible must be done to prevent or at least to lessen the effect of the recurrence of conditions under which large numbers of farmers conduct their operations at a loss."

Are We to Poison the Life-blood of the Nation?

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of way to other measures as more important and, under the surface, quite determined opposition from elements that are determined that an unrestricted flow of the undesirable classes shall continue, caused this 20 years' delay in the literacy test. In 1906 a bill excluding persons who could not read or write English was debated but another law creating a bureau of immigration was enacted.

Finally, however, a literacy test was enacted. Popular opinion compelled some sort of action and Congress acted.

But the measure passed was travesty which has recently been publicly denounced by Frederick A. Wallis, Commissioner of Immigration at Ellis Island, as worthless. It was not until the measure finally became a law, that the identity of the interests, which had played the leading part in the years of committee-smothering, and newspaper denunciation of any attempt to exclude aspiring immigrants because their native land had denied them education, was revealed.

The literacy test as finally passed is a monument to legislative skill in innocuous but encouraging phrasing. Each immigrant must read 30 words or more, selected by the immigration authorities. But instead of reading them in English he is expressly permitted to choose any language, *including Hebrew or Yiddish.*

Never in any legislative enactment has bolder class legislation been perpetrated than this express sanction of one foreign race's tongue.

So far as the wording of the rest of the statute is concerned, there are no other languages in the world. French, German, Scandinavian, Spanish, Italian and two or three hundred other languages and dialects, pass unnoticed. But express indorsement is given by the American Congress to Yiddish.

But clearly as this governmental preference for Hebrews may seem to have been stated by this language, Jewish influences in Congress, then as now ably represented, were not satisfied. Still another provision was incorporated, one which provided that in case an immigrant was unable to pass the literacy test, still he might claim lawful admission to the United States if he proved that he was fleeing from a country in which religious persecution prevailed.

Such was the ending of 25 years of struggle in which the attacking forces finally won a title to a law enabling them to conserve America for Americans, while the defending forces insidiously wrote the language of the law so the immigration gates remained as wide open as ever.

In a sense, perhaps, the class legislation question should not be considered as a cause of present immigration troubles but rather as a constitutional barrier to the establishment of future safeguards. It is probably true that not until recently has the need been so patent of excluding persons because of their racial and social non-assimilability. The Chinese Exclusion Act was inspired rather by industrial fear of labor competition from persons educated to cheaper standards of living than by an understanding that the Chinese were racially unfit for American citizenship.

Now, however, the conditions in immigration have reached the point where the official report of the House Committee on Immigration recognizes the problem as one of race.

The extent of the present immigrant flood will be considered in the next article.